

VZCZCXRO2216
RR RUEHMA RUEHPA
DE RUEHYD #0124/01 0300935
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 300935Z JAN 07
FM AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 7230
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHUJA/AMEMBASSY ABUJA 1249
RUEHGI/AMEMBASSY BANGUI 0102
RUEHBZ/AMEMBASSY BRAZZAVILLE 0020
RUEHKE/AMEMBASSY KINSHASA 0879
RUEHLC/AMEMBASSY LIBREVILLE 1421
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 1488
RUEHMA/AMEMBASSY MALABO 0158
RUEHNI/AMEMBASSY NDJAMENA 1387
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 1738
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0381
RUCPDO/DEPT OF COMMERCE WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 YAOUNDE 000124

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SENSITIVE
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DEPT FOR AF/C
LONDON AND PARIS FOR AFRICA ACTION OFFICERS
EUCOM FOR J5-A AFRICA DIVISION AND POLAD YATES
USDOC FOR BUREAU OF THE CENSUS, OFFICE OF AFRICA

E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: [SOCI](#) [PGOV](#) [CM](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: CAMEROON: 2005 CENSUS RESULTS DELAYED

REF: A. 05 CAMEROON 2101
[1](#)B. ABUJA 44

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Summary

[1](#)1. (U) Results from Cameroon's third General Population and Housing census, launched November 11, 2005, will be delayed until at least August 2007. The Government claims it lacks the funds to publish the report, whose results were promised by July 2006. The late publication of the results, whether from bureaucratic difficulties or lack of political will, will affect the 2007 legislative elections as the certain substantial population increase would warrant more seats in Parliament. End Summary.

How many people and
where do they live?

[1](#)2. (U) To much fanfare in November 2005, the Government of Cameroon (GRC) launched the third General Population and Housing census, the first to be held in almost 20 years (Ref A). Normally the census should be held every 10 years, but lack of funds prevented this. The 2005 census had been ordered by presidential decree in September 2001. When the census was announced, rough results were promised within a few months, and the full statistical analysis within 8-12 months.

[1](#)3. (U) An accurate picture of Cameroon's population is badly needed. The last official population figure is 16 million. Conservative estimates place it at 17.3; others believe there could be as many as 18-20 million people living in Cameroon. Census counters in fall 2005 encountered some difficulties in reaching remote villages and some resistance to answering

questions from people who did not understand the process. The counting time was extended and though there were reports that some people never spoke to a census taker, the exercise was probably conducted as well as could be hoped for given the operating environment.

Survey Says?

¶4. (U) The lack of rough or final results went largely unremarked when target deadlines were missed in 2006. Cameroon is notoriously slow in publishing official reports, so delays in the census did not raise any eyebrows. (Note: The National Elections Observatory's report on the 2004 presidential elections was only published in late 2006. End Note.) The independent newspaper Le Messenger published a small item January 19 reporting that the census results would not be available until August 2007, and citing "informed sources" who blamed funding delays at various stages of the operation for the overall delay. According to Le Messenger, the GRC is supposed to release 960 million CFA (about USD 1.9 million) to accelerate work.

Comment

¶5. (SBU) When the census was launched, the GRC stressed its importance for properly implementing the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the National Good Governance program. Of course, knowing the size and distribution of the population is also important with respect to elections, and Cameroon is slated to hold legislative and municipal elections in summer ¶2007. Despite the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement's (CPDM) firm control of the legislature, there are

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indications that senior officials fear the CPDM's position is more tenuous than it appears. If census results indicate that the number of seats in parliament must be increased, the opposition could have a relatively easy shot at the new seats. This would not likely result in a power shift in parliament, but could give opposition parties and candidates a better standing to contest the presidency in 2011.

¶6. (SBU) While funding delays could very well be a problem in publishing the census results, softening political will is probably also a factor. It is lost on no one that neighboring Nigeria managed to count its population of 140 million and to analyze and publish the results in the time since counting in Cameroon concluded (Ref. B). End Comment.
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